

The March 8, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened by First Selectman Beth Heller in the Town Hall Central Meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Present: First Selectman Beth Heller, Deputy First Selectman Sheila McCreven, Joseph Crisco, Paul Kuriakose, David Lober, and David Vogel.

Present for Staff: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese; Assistant Administrative Officer Karen Crosby; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; Media Specialist Pua Ford; and Clerk Geraldine Shaw.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REMARKS

"Good evening! Happy "almost" Spring and St. Patrick's Day! Do not forget to turn your clocks ahead one hour this weekend and check the batteries in your smoke detectors.

Today is also International Women's Day, which is a global holiday celebrated annually on March 8 as a focal point in the women's rights movement, bringing attention to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women.

As I have been saying for the past few months, this year, as in previous years, the budget process has been extremely challenging. If all departments, boards, and commission budget requests were granted for next fiscal year, our budget would have increased by slightly over 10%, which I know you all agree, is not sustainable.

With the Board of Selectmen's review and recommendations, this request is now down to a 4.98% increase. As you know we made that recommendation to the Board of Finance at our Special Meeting on February 21st.

The Board of Finance began its budget review at its last meeting on March 2nd. There were no decisions made nor votes taken at that meeting, and they will meet again on March 16th.

*Once again, I encourage residents to pay careful attention to the budget process and voice their opinions. The most effective way for folks to share your opinion and/or ask questions is at the **Monday, April 24 Preliminary Budget Hearing** when the Board of Finance presents its proposed budget. This meeting will take place at the Amity High School Auditorium at 7:30 pm. Following this hearing, the Board of Finance may make changes to its proposed budget which will then be presented at the Annual Town Meeting on Monday, May 15th.*

Each time we go through the budget process it becomes more clear to me that we must grow and diversify our Grand List. Our on-going budget dilemma is caused by a long-term revenue problem. We have consolidated staff positions and cut programs. There are very few ways we can make additional meaningful cuts to the budget without cutting services, so we need to focus on growing revenue. New revenue is critical to fund our high-quality education and other important Town services. I always welcome other ideas about how to grow the Grand List, generate additional revenue through other means, and otherwise achieve efficiencies to achieve municipal budget stabilization and predictability going forward.

The Town can grow its grand list by expanding the commercial district and also offering new and diverse housing. Our 2030 Task Force is examining how to accomplish just that, with a goal of having a healthier Grand List by 2030. The Task Force has already presented their connectivity proposal in the business district to maximize grant opportunities and will present strategies on placemaking and other ideas for the Business District at the April 12th Board of Selectmen meeting. I look forward to hearing their recommendations.

With its important work in mind, I am appointing 2 new members to the 2030 Task Force, their resumes are in your packet tonight. I have confirmed these appointments with Task Force Co-chairs Dickerson and Jacobs. The new appointments are Justin Anderson and Robert Sharrer.

I continue to seek ways to expand our regional services. We will be discussing this evening a proposed "Memorandum of Understanding" between Beacon Falls and Woodbridge to provide District Animal Control services on a month-to-month basis at this point, following an horrific animal situation that occurred recently in Beacon Falls.

On a positive note, I am pleased to share that a 55+ housing proposal which was approved by both The Town Plan and Zoning Commission and the Inland Wetlands Agency has now begun. The project is located at Litchfield Turnpike and Bradley Road. Toll Brothers estimates construction will be completed in 3 years. This housing project will grow our Grand List with approximately 70 new homes, while not add to the enrollment in our schools.

I will be meeting next week with Selectmen Vogel and Kuriakose along with Tony Genovese to discuss hiring a consultant to review and revise the RFP for the former Country Club of Woodbridge. I will update you as we move forward.

Last month there was a request from the Massaro Farm to the Board of Selectmen for a planned upgrade, which included adding a farm stand to the barn on the property. This was referred to Town Plan and Zoning for an 8-24 Review. However, they were not successful in their grant application for the farm stand, so this project has been withdrawn.

I am delighted to let you know that our wonderful Town Library staff has stepped up to coordinate Town-wide events such as Earth Day 2024, Woodbridge Like Me Day, and this year's Rid Litter Day to be held on Saturday, April 22nd. As we have had several staff changes over the past few months, we have taken the opportunity to examine resources and reallocate department assignments related to Town events.

Please remember to add the Amity Budget Referendum on your calendars. It will be held on Tuesday, May 2nd at the Center Building Gymnasium."

WOODBIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Vonda Tencza

Ms. Tencza reported that:

- Enrollment as of February is 865
- Due to the excellence of the Beecher reading program, she is seeking a waiver for the new State required reading program
- Safety and security upgrades – funding may come from a surplus/grants
- March 15, 2023 – first meeting of the ad hoc building review committee
- Project Open Choice – continue to address District billing issues – working to involve State Dept. of Education for guidance

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S REPORT – Anthony Genovese

Monthly Report – Mr. Genovese reported that as of February 28, 2023, he is estimating a year-end budget surplus of \$651,087. Because the current Town budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, increase to fund balance at year end is projected to be \$251,087. The fund balance at June 30, 2023, is estimated to be \$7.83M or 14.59% of annual expenses.

Expenses – deficits are expected in the Natural Gas account, due to a rate more than double that used for the budget, and the Waste Management account as solid waste tonnage is increasing compared to the budget estimate. Recycling fees have also increased. The Board suggested increasing fees charged to private haulers.

Amity Regional School District – Due to two failed referenda, Woodbridge is contributing \$134,046 less than budgeted for FY2023; instead of sending a check for distribution of the 2022 surplus, the Town's March payment is reduced by \$228,9997.

FUNDING REQUESTS

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED** to recommend the following funding requests to the Board of Finance:

2223-20 – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 8,000
To: Town Plan & Zoning – Gen'l. Prof. Svc. (1180-00/52100)
From: Revenue – Town Plan & Zoning – Zoning Hearings & Regs (1-5-1850/45420)
For: For a traffic review for 10-14 Merritt Avenue. Fees paid by the applicant will fund the traffic review.

(Heller – McCreven) Unanimously approved

2223-21 – Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 7,000
To: Information Systems – Software Maintenance (1145-00/53540)
From: Employee Benefits – Workers Compensation (1710-00/51600)
For: Fund increases in software packages that were not known during budget preparation

(Crisco – Vogel) Unanimously Approved

2223-22 – Allocation Amount: \$ 11,200
The Board requested more information regarding this request and put it forward to the April meeting.

2223-23 – Interdepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 3,000
To: Parks Dept. Overtime (1520-00/50410) \$1,500
Rentals (1520-00/53610) \$1,500
From: Revenue – Donations (1-6-1100/46410)
For: Transfer donation from Beth-Wood League to the Parks Dept. budget.

(Heller – Lober) Unanimously approved

2223-24 – Intradepartmental Transfer Amount: \$ 22,900
To: Bldg. Maint. Repair & Maint (1370-00/53530) \$18,500
CNR-Bldg. Maint. (302-37/00/57470/EVCS) \$4,000
From: Bldg. Maint. Part Time Maintenance (1370-00/50330)
For: Fund the shortage in the Repair & Maintenance Bldg Line (18,500)
Fund the Town's portion of updating 2 EV charging Stations (\$4,400)

(Vogel – McCreven) Unanimously approved

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S REPORT – Karen Crosby

Ms. Crosby reported that:

- Revamped Website – planned for review in May with a June launch
- Employee 457b plan – Switch to Empower in July
- Food Scraps – researching the DEEP program
- Purchasing – revamping to consolidate purchases and large leases (copiers)

- Safety Committee – reconstituting committee – scheduling meetings and programs

CONSENT AGENDA

The Board **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) on items:

Item a. Acknowledge receipt of Town Clerk’s reports for the month ending February 28 and for the cumulative from July 1, 2022 through February 28, 2023.

Item b. Acknowledge resignation: Kate Rozen from the Conservation Commission
Kim Hynes from the Recreation Commission

Item c. Permission to hold a Luminaria event at Fitzgerald Field – this event is postponed to a date not certain.

Minutes – January 11, 2023, Regular Meeting approved with correction of a typo (Heller – Vogel)
February 8, 2023, Regular Meeting approved with correction of a type (Heller – Crisco)
February 21, 2023, Regular Meeting (Budget Recommendations) approved (Heller – Crisco)

TOWN COUNSEL

Amity Woodbridge Historical Society – Restoration Grant – Cow Barn

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) that the Town of Woodbridge proceed with the funding regarding the cow barn on Litchfield Turnpike in accordance with the documents submitted to the Board of Selectmen for approval and that includes the “Easement”; “Declaration of Covenant’s”; and “Declaration of Preservation Restrictions”.

Memorandum of Understanding with Beacon Falls

The First Selectman of Beacon Falls has requested the Regional Animal Control, based in Woodbridge, provide temporary services.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – Crisco) to authorize the First Selectman to execute the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Town of Woodbridge and the Town of Beacon Falls for Animal Control Services as presented to the Board at this March 8, 2023, meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public was present, and the Clerk did not receive any written comments by 3:00 p.m. this date.

RECESS

At 6:00 p.m. the Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (Heller – McCreven) to recess the meeting until 6:30 p.m., the published time of the Public Hearing re proposed ordinances.

PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCES OF THE TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE

At 6:30 p.m. Ms. Heller convened the Public Hearing and asked for a Motion to waive the reading of the legal notice of the public hearing – **Unanimously Approved** (McCreven – Vogel)

The legal notice is included here for historical reference.

TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to §4-5 (c) of the Charter of the Town of Woodbridge, notice is hereby given that the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen will hold a Public Hearing on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Central Meeting Room, 11 Meetinghouse Lane, Woodbridge, CT to receive comments and the following proposed changes to the Woodbridge Code of Ordinance:

*NEW - 1. Establish a new Ordinance pursuant to CGS 12-129 Refund of excess payments:
Authorize the Tax Collector to retain payments in excess of the amount due provided the amount of the excess payment is twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) or less.*

*REVISED -2. Woodbridge Code §75-5 – membership and terms of office:
Extending terms of office for Board and Commission members to December 31st of terms expiring in any given year beginning with the year 2023*

Copies of the proposed ordinances are on file in the Town Clerk's Office for review, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Written comments will be received in the Selectmen's Office until 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, either by mail or by e-mail to gshaw@woodbridgect.org or may be presented that evening during the Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m.

Dated this 23th day of February 2023

*Town of Woodbridge
Board of Selectmen*

Mr. Weiner explained the purpose of each proposed ordinance.

Excess tax payments – this Ordinance allows the Woodbridge Tax Collector to withhold the refunding of excess tax payments in the amount up to and including \$25.00 as such refunds are not cost effective for the tax office and the accounting department. There is no mechanism to credit excess payments to the taxpayer's account.

Woodbridge Code §75-5 – Boards and Commissions, Membership and Terms of Office – the revision follows the term of elected officials due to changing the date of the biennial Town regular election from the first Monday in May of odd numbered years beginning with 2023, to the second Tuesday in November in accordance with State election regulations.

Ms. Heller asked if there were any comments regarding either of the proposed revisions to the Ordinances.

Hearing none, Ms. Heller declared the Public Hearing closed and asked for a vote on each.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Kuriakose) to adopt a new ordinance authorizing the Tax Collector to retain payments in excess of the amount due provided the amount of the excess payment is twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) or less.

The Board of Selectmen **VOTED UNANIMOUSLY** (McCreven – Crisco) to amend Woodbridge Ordinance §75-5 extending the terms of office for Boards and Commission members to December 31st of terms expiring in any given year beginning with the year 2023.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Vogel, seconded by Mr. Kuriakose, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk